

LLANBEDR TO HARLECH LINK MAIN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Report No. 208

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

LLANBEDR TO HARLECH LINK MAIN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (G1417)

prepared for Dwr Cymru - Welsh Water

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water are proposing to lay a new link main between Llanbedr and Harlech in the county of Gwynedd, a distance of just over five kilometres.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) was commissioned by Welsh Water to carry out this assessment in accordance with a brief prepared by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service acting as the Archaeological Curator.

2. ASSESSMENT BRIEF

An initial report was requested from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, assessing the likely archaeological impact of the proposed pipeline and suggesting mitigatory measures.

The basic requirement was for a desk-top survey and field search of the proposed area in order to assess the impact of the proposals on the archaeological and heritage features within the area concerned. The importance and condition of known archaeological remains were to be assessed and areas of archaeological potential and new sites to be identified. Measures to mitigate the effects of the proposed pipeline on the archaeological resource were to be suggested.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust's proposals for fulfilling these requirements were, briefly, as follows:

- a) to identify and record the cultural heritage of the area to be affected by the proposals
- b) to evaluate the importance of what was identified (both as a cultural landscape and as the individual items which make up that landscape); and
- c) to recommend ways in which damage to the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 Desk-top Study

Consultation of maps, computer records, written records and reference works, which make up the Sites and Monuments Record, was undertaken at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

3.2 Field Search

This was undertaken on 17 June 1996 by two members of the Trust's staff. The whole of the proposed area was walked. Conditions were good for fieldwork, and light and visibility were good.

Sites identified were marked on copies of 1:2500 OS maps as accurately as possible without surveying. Forms were filled in assessing each site, and detailed notes made of the more important. Photographs were taken of the potential sites identified.

3.3 Report

All available information was collated, and transferred onto a map at a scale of 1:2500 for convenience. The sites were then assessed and allocated to the categories listed below. These are intended to give an idea of the importance of the site and the level of response likely to be required; descriptions of the sites and specific recommendations for further evaluation or mitigatory measures, as appropriate, are given in the relevant sections of this report.

In some cases, further investigation may result in sites being moved into different categories. The criteria used for allocating sites to categories are based on those used by the Secretary of State when considering ancient monuments for scheduling; these are set out in Annexe 3 to Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Wales): Archaeology and Planning.

3.4 Categories

The following categories were used to define the importance of the archaeological resource.

Category A - Sites of national importance.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and sites of schedulable or listable quality, *i.e.* those which would meet the requirements for scheduling (ancient monuments) or listing (buildings) or both.

Sites which are scheduled or listed have legal protection, and it is recommended that all Category A sites remain preserved and protected *in situ*.

Category B - Sites of regional or county importance.

Sites which would not fulfil the criteria for scheduling or listing, but which are nevertheless of particular importance within the region.

Preservation *in situ* is the preferred option for Category B sites, but if damage or destruction cannot be avoided, appropriate detailed recording might be an acceptable alternative.

Category C - Sites of district or local importance.

Sites which are not of sufficient importance to justify a recommendation for preservation if threatened.

Category C sites nevertheless merit adequate recording in advance of damage or destruction.

Category D - Minor and damaged sites.

Sites which are of minor importance or so badly damaged that too little remains to justify their inclusion in a higher category.

For Category D sites, rapid recording, either in advance or during destruction, should be sufficient.

Category E - Sites needing further investigation.

Sites whose importance is as yet undetermined and which will require further work before they can be allocated to categories A - D are temporarily placed in this category, with specific recommendations for further evaluation. By the end of the assessment there should be no sites remaining in this category.

3.5 Definition of Impact

The impact is defined as *none*, *slight*, *likely* or *considerable* as follows:

None:

There is no construction impact on this particular site.

Slight:

This has generally been used where the impact is marginal and would not by the nature of the site cause irreversible damage to the remainder of the feature, *e.g.* part of a trackway or field bank.

Likely:

In some instances the site in question would not fall within the area to be directly affected by the proposed pipeline, but would fall within the construction area and therefore may, subject to its nature, be removed or damaged.

Considerable:

The total removal of a feature or its partial removal which would effectively destroy the remainder of the site.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

Archive material consulted during the desk-top study provided dating evidence for known sites and maps of successive dates allowed an appreciation of the development of the landscape. The Ordnance Survey coverage of the area is good.

The area of the proposed pipeline lies in the parishes of Llandanwg and Llanbedr in the commote of Ardudwy and the cantref of Uwch-Artro in the county of Meirionnydd. Llandanwg included the medieval borough of Harlech.

4.2 The Archaeological Background

4.2.1 Prehistoric (up to 48AD)

Of known prehistoric sites, two standing stones of perhaps the late Neolithic period or the Early Bronze Age survive by the banks of the Artro near Llanbedr bridge, at a point which it has been suggested marks the beginning of a prehistoric trackway, the Ffordd Du, which made its way inland from a landing point at the coast (Bowen and Gresham 57). Further north and west, the terraces of a large field system of Iron Age date survive at Frondeg. The homestead associated with it has been destroyed, though the site may be marked by an area of disturbed ground in the second field below the cross roads at Frondeg (Bowen and Gresham 195).

4.2.2 Roman (48AD - 400AD)

There is no known evidence of Roman presence in the area; the Roman roads lay across the Ardudwy uplands (Bowen and Gresham 1967 244-258).

4.2.3 Medieval and Early Modern (400AD - 1800AD)

The coastal siting of the church at Llandanwg, though its present fabric is no older than the fifteenth century (RCAM 60), may reflect the earliest ecclesiastical organisation in the area, with the comings and goings of missionaries from Gaul and Ireland. The church itself contains a cross-incised stone, a rough pillar-stone bearing the words *IN (G?)ENUI/IARRI(/HI)C IA(CIT)* ("[The stone of] Ingenuus Iarrus [?]. He lies here"), and another inscribed *EQUESTRI NOMINE* ("[The person of the] name of Equester [lies here]"). All date from the early post-Roman period (Nash-Williams 169).

The Edwardian settlement is reflected in the construction of a castle and establishment of a borough at Harlech, where there is no evidence for any pre-existing Welsh settlement (Soulsby 138-9) - though in the Mabinogion tale *Branwen verch Llyr*, which dates from before the conquest, the rock of Harddlech is imagined as the court of a king.

The tale also appears to imagine that Matholwch's ships sailed up to the giant Bran's feet as he sat on the rock, and it is interesting that the Black Prince's *Register* of building accounts consistently refers to the "path from the sea" - *pro passu de mare usque castrum*, implying that the sea still reached to the foot of the rock (Taylor 71). Documents of the fourteenth century refer to the "port of HardeLOWE", and as late as 1564 a manuscript twice refers to the castle as being near the sea (Steers 135). However, by 1650 vessels could no longer reach Harlech (Lewis 61). Possibly the land immediately to the west of the foreshore saw very considerable accretion in the late Medieval period, or possibly access to the Castle was by a canal cut into a natural creek which flows north and empties into Traeth Bach near Llechollwyn. This would have the merit of explaining the place name Ty Gwyn y Gamlas ("the white house of the canal") at the watersmeet, and suggests a parallel with the channel cut at Rhuddlan between 1277 and 1280 (Taylor 27).

Against this theory, the thirteenth century documents concerning Harlech do not refer to a *fossa* ("ditch") as at Rhuddlan but to the *mare* (sea), and there is no reference to the canal being cut. It may therefore be a work of later date.

The borough towns essentially formed part of a unified system of defence in which the military significance of the castle was paralleled by the economic and social function of the settlement, and Harlech was to see armed conflict as late as the civil war of the seventeenth century, when it was the last castle in England and Wales to hold out for the King (Tucker 126). The early modern period is archaeologically represented by the substantial stone farmhouses which survive at Argoed, Ymwlch (Smith 167, 178) and Lasynys Fawr, home of Ellis Wynne, author of the high-Tory prose satire *Gweledigaethau y bardd cwsgr* (RCAM 59).

4.2.4 Modern and Industrial (1800 - present day)

The quickening economic pace of nineteenth century Merionethshire is reflected in the construction of a wharf at Pensarn, already marked on the first 1" ordnance survey of 1839/40, where a kiln burnt lime imported by sea, and from which slate from Llanfair quarry and timber were exported (Richards 150). In the 1860s the Aberystwyth and Welch (sic) Coast Railway made its way up the coast from Machynlleth to Pwllheli, which, in its subsequent guises as the Cambrian Railways, the Great Western and B.R. has maintained a precarious existence ever since (Baughan 157-161). This permitted the development of tourist facilities in the Harlech area, sponsored initially by Samuel Holland, the County's M.P. The St David's golf course was opened in 1894 (Boyd 288, Clayton 20-21).

4.3 Existing statutory protection

Three sites or monuments within the area adjacent to the proposed link have been afforded statutory protection. Harlech castle and the standing stones at Llanbedr are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Llanfair-isaf farmhouse is Listed Grade II

4.4 Archaeology of the Proposed Development Area.

4.4.1 Introduction

The development corridor proposed for the pipelines consists of a number of different types of land-forms, including vegetated sand-dunes, grazing land, hay-fields, an alluvial river-plain and metalled roads.

1a. Harlech culvert SH58263150

Category B Impact: slight

A stone-lined drainage ditch or culvert, flowing north-eastwards, approximately 1.2 metres wide. It is possible that this represents the course of the channel which once gave ships access to Harlech.

Recommendations for mitigatory measures: A watching brief during the early stages of operations should reveal any surviving remains, which should be recorded at an appropriate level.

1b. Harlech culvert SH58113139

Category B Impact: slight

The channel noted in (1) above is open at this point also, and measures approximately 2.3 metres wide.

2. Harlech castle watergate SH58043129

Category E Impact: slight

The medieval watergate of Harlech castle, constructed in 1289 by Ralfe de Ocle at a cost of £124 15s 11d, and an area now used as a car-park and visitor reception building, possibly representing the site of the castle quay.

3. Harlech quarries SH57703054 to 57683029

Category D Impact: none

An area of small-scale quarrying and mineral trials in a vein of slate, possibly worked in part to obtain embankment fill for the railway, and subsequently used in places as a stone dump. The area is heavily overgrown.

4. Gateway to "Stepways" SH57643037

Category D Impact: likely

An ornamented gateway entrance to a private dwelling ("Stepways"), consisting of heraldic lions on worked stone pillars on either side of a wrought-iron gate.

5. Garden at Hafodwen SH57542995

Category C Impact: slight

A twentieth century ornamented garden belonging to "Hafodwen", extending to the railway line, now overgrown.

6. Agricultural building at Llanfair SH57392937

Category C Impact: likely

A small animal shed measuring approximately 10m by 5m with a cobbled floor. There is a double open entrance in the western end and in the middle sections of the south-west wall. It is surrounded by an enclosure wall approximately 1m high, entered by two gateways. The walls are made of country rock; those in the shed and on the south-west and south-east sides of the enclosure are mortared. A building is shown at this point on the 1" ordnance survey map of 1839-1840.

7. Agricultural building at Llanfair SH57412939

Category C Impact: likely

A small rough animal shelter or barn, divided into two and entered by two doors. The walls are roughly mortared with some drystone areas, and rise to between 2.5m and 5m. It retains a slated roof.

8. Field system at Llanfair SH57352930

Category B Impact: likely

A system of terraced fields of possible Iron Age date encompassing both sides of the present main road. The associated homestead may be marked by a circle of disturbed stones approximately 30m in diameter at SH57372930.

9. Building on Llanfair farm SH57562922

Category D Impact: likely

The possible remains of a building: part of a mortared wall are visible.

10. Trackway to Llanfair Isaf farm SH57642880

Category D Impact: slight

A farm trackway, 3m wide, leading to Llanfair Isaf, enclosed between walls of country rock. This is marked on the 1" ordnance survey of 1839-1840.

11. Field boundary SH57692872

Category D Impact: slight

A double-thickness stone field boundary, built out of country rock, with copings, standing 1.7m high.

12. Field boundary SH57682858

Category D Impact: slight

A stone field boundary built out of country rock, standing 1.5m high.

13. Field boundary SH57762834

Category D Impact: slight

A stone field boundary built out of country rock, standing approximately 1.5m high.

14. Field boundary SH57822820

Category D Impact: slight

A stone field boundary built out of country rock, standing approximately 2m high.

15. Agricultural building at Pensarn SH57842804

Category C Impact: likely

Built out of local stone and orientated east to west, measuring approximately 15m by 7.5m built into the slope. The east gable reaches 3m high and contains a wooden door. A slate roof survives on the northern roof pitch, and corrugated iron sheeting has been placed on the south roof pitch. A building is marked here on the 1" ordnance survey map of 1839-1840.

16. Road to Pensarn wharf SH57922792

Category D Impact: slight

A road giving access to Pensarn station and wharf. Both the wharf and the road are marked on the 1" ordnance survey of 1839-1840.

17. Trackway to sewage plant SH58122760

Category D Impact: slight

A trackway leading to a modern sewage treatment plant.

18. Embankment on Afon Artro SH58222719

Category D Impact: slight

A river embankment constructed out of country rock and grassed over, reaching up to 2m high from the base of the ditch.

19. Stone dump on Afon Artro SH57162711

Category D Impact: slight

A stone dump at the bend of the river.

20. Llanbedr standing stone SH58332700

Category A Impact: none

A column of rectangular section approximately 3.5m high of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment found few sites of archaeological significance which will be affected by the proposed pipeline, though a number are of greater potential significance. It is recommended that a watching brief be maintained over the length of the pipeline where it crosses open country, which will cover sites 8 and 20 and that particular attention also be paid to sites 1a

and b and 2. This will involve examining the pipeline trench following the topsoil strip and investigating any visible features.

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Location of sites listed in the gazetteer

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